

THE INNER SHRINE

A Devotional Series

Prepared with Special
Reference to Indian Needs

General Editor :

J. N. FARQUHAR, M.A., D.Litt., D.D.

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M.A.

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M.A., D.Sc.

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Introduction by C. G. PEARSON, M.A.

SELECTIONS

FROM

The Imitation of
Christ

BY

THOMAS À KEMPIS

With an Introduction

BY

C. G. PEARSON

SENIOR CHAPLAIN, ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
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Introduction

MEN have always known that God must be sought for in simplicity and self-denial.

Jesus Himself said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And men have tried many ways of simplifying their life. In very early times Christian ascetics copied non-Christians and betook themselves to the solitude of the Egyptian deserts to serve God in silence and austerity. But it was soon found that the spirit of Christ in them would not allow them to stay alone; and it was not long before these ascetics began to gather together into groups and settlements, where they could serve and love God in their fellow men. Men still retired from the world, but they retired into another world in which there was room for sympathy and forbearance and friendship.

As the centuries have passed, God has made it clearer to Chris-

tians what the purpose of this retirement is to be. Its purpose is to be the saving of the world. Men still bind themselves to God by the vows of obedience, poverty and celibacy. They will give up their early morning and some hours of the night to the praises of God, but their days they spend in serving men. They settle in poor districts or in non-Christian countries, and there they go out from their prayers to teach in schools or to serve the sick or to preach the Gospel.

It is out of the midst of this "Religious Life" of Christianity that the book from which these selections are made has come to us. Thomas à Kempis, its author, was born in 1379 or 1380, in the country which is now known as Holland. His parents were poor. His father had to work hard to keep their home together, and his mother gained a little money by keeping a school for the little children of the village. She was a good woman, and her religious nature had a great influence over her son, Thomas.

At the age of twelve, Thomas was sent to a school in the little town of Deventer, to which his older brother, John, had been sent some years before. It was kept by a new Community, called "The Brothers of the Common Life." He was welcomed kindly, for his brother's sake, by the great scholar, Florentine Radewyn, one of the Brothers. He was still a little boy, so Florentine sent him at first to live with a good woman in the town, until he was old enough to live in the House of the Brethren. Five years later he was already an advanced scholar and a skilled copyist. In those days, before printing was invented, a neat writer could earn a great deal of money by copying books. Everything that Thomas earned he paid in, quite naturally, towards the expenses of the House of the Brethren. He probably never thought of doing anything else. He had been boarded and taught without charge, and they were all like one big family. They had everything in common, like the first Christians.

In 1400, when he was twenty, he became a novice in the neighbouring convent of Mount St. Agnes, and five years later he was allowed to take his vows. Except for one short interval, he lived and worked there till the day of his death.

His life was not an idle one. He copied many books, and wrote several of his own. His sermons were famous, and people came from many miles round to hear them. But it was when he was speaking to God that the true man showed himself, his face upturned, his whole form rigid and upright, standing even on tiptoe while he poured forth the praises of God.

So he lived through a long life, with Christ, "a kindly, fresh-coloured man with soft brown eyes." He died in 1471, at the age of ninety-one. It was not an eventful life. He does not seem to have been a striking man, except at his prayers. And his book is not striking, unless it is read in a spirit of prayer. It should be read slowly, with pauses.

even after every sentence, that the spirit of God which breathes in the words may have time to enter into the spirit of the reader. So read, there seems to be no limit to the range of its appeal. Men of every race and every condition have testified, out of every kind of circumstances, that it has pointed them the way to courage and strength and God.

Note on the Present Translation

The present translation is copied almost entirely from one published anonymously in Oxford in 1841, based on a translation printed in London in 1677. The few alterations have been made with a view to making the sense clearer to non-Christian readers.

As this edition is designed largely for the use of non-Christians, only one selection is taken from the Fourth Book of the "Imitation." This book deals with the Holy Mysteries, and it is not the custom of Christians to speak of these before those who have not yet been baptized.

The First Book¹

Admonitions, useful for a
Spiritual Life

SELECTION I

Of the Imitation of Christ

“**W**H^E that followeth Me,
walketh not in dark-
ness,” saith the
Lord. These are
the words of Christ, by which we
are admonished how we ought to
imitate His life and manners, if
we will be truly enlightened, and
be delivered from all blindness of
heart.

Let therefore our chiefest
endeavour be, to meditate upon
the life of Jesus Christ.

II. The doctrine of Christ ex-
ceedeth all the doctrines of holy
men; and he that hath the Spirit,
will find therein an hidden
manna.¹

¹ Manna was the name given to a
mysterious food with which the Jewish
pilgrims were fed by God in the Wilder-
ness.

But it falleth out, that many who often hear the Gospel of Christ, are yet but little affected, because they are void of the Spirit of Christ.

But whosoever would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ, must endeavour to conform his life wholly to the life of Christ.

SELECTION II

Of the Vanity of Knowledge without Holiness

All men naturally desire to know; but what availeth knowledge without the fear of God?

What will it avail thee to dispute profoundly of the Trinity,¹ if thou be void of humility, and art thereby displeasing to the Trinity?

Surely high words do not make a man holy and just; but a virtuous life maketh him dear to God.

I had rather feel compunction, than understand the definition thereof.

Surely, an humble farmer that serveth God is better than a proud

¹ An abstruse doctrine of the Christian religion concerning the nature of God.

philosopher that neglecting himself laboureth to understand the course of the heavens.

If I understood all things in the world, and were not living in love, what would that help me in the sight of God, who will judge me according to my deeds?

Many words do not satisfy the soul; but a good life comforteth the mind, and a pure conscience giveth great assurance in the sight of God.

The more thou knowest, and the better thou understandest, the more grievously shalt thou therefore be judged, unless thy life be also more holy.

SELECTION III

Of the Doctrine of Truth

Happy is he whom truth by itself doth teach, not by figures and words that pass away; but as it is in itself.

Our own opinion and our own sense do often deceive us, and they discern but little.

What availeth it to cavil and dispute much about dark and hidden things; whereas for being ignorant

of them we shall not be so much as reproved at the day of judgment?

It is a great folly to neglect the things that are profitable and necessary, and give our minds to that which is curious and hurtful: we have eyes and see not.

II. And what have we to do with *genus* and with *species*, the dry notions of logicians?

He to whom the Eternal Word speaketh, is delivered from a world of unnecessary conceptions.

From that one Word are all things, and all speak that one; and this is the Beginning, which also speaketh unto us.

No man without that Word understandeth or judgeth rightly.

He to whom all things are one, he who reduceth all things to one, and seeth all things in one; may enjoy a quiet mind, and remain peaceable in God.

O God, who art the truth, make me one with Thee in everlasting love.

It is tedious to me often to read and hear many things: In Thee is all that I would have and can desire.

Let all doctors hold their peace ;
let all creatures be silent in Thy
sight ; speak Thou alone unto me.

III. The more a man is united
within himself, and becometh in-
wardly simple and pure, so much
the more and higher things doth
he understand without labour ; for
that he receiveth intellectual light
from above.

A pure, sincere, and stable
spirit is not distracted, though it
be employed in many works ;
because it works all to the honour
of God, and inwardly being still
and quiet, seeks not itself in any-
thing it doth.

Who hinders and troubles thee
more than the unmortified affec-
tions of thine own heart ?

Who hath a greater combat than
he that laboureth to overcome
himself ?

This ought to be our endeavour,
to conquer ourselves, and daily to
wax stronger, and to make a
further growth in holiness.

Yet learning is not to be blamed,
nor the mere knowledge of any-
thing whatsoever to be disliked, it
being good in itself, and ordained

of God ; but a good conscience and a virtuous life is always to be preferred before it.

V. O, if men bestowed as much labour in the rooting out of vices, and planting of virtues, as they do in moving of questions, neither would there so much hurt be done, nor so great scandal be given in the world.

He is truly great, that is great in charity.

He is truly great, that is little in himself, and that maketh no account of any height of honour.

He is truly wise, that accounteth all earthly things as dung, that he may gain Christ.

And he is truly learned, that doeth the will of God, and forsaketh his own will.

SELECTION IV

Of Flying from Vain Hope and Pride

He is vain that putteth his trust in man, or creatures.

Be not ashamed to serve others for the love of Jesus Christ ; nor to be esteemed poor in this world.

Presume not upon thyself, but place thy hope in God.

Do what lieth in thy power and God will assist thy good affection.

II. Glory not in wealth if thou have it, nor in powerful friends ; but in God who giveth all things, and above all desireth to give thee Himself.

Extol not thyself for the height of thy stature or beauty of thy person, which may be disfigured and destroyed with a little sickness.

Take not pleasure in thy natural gifts, or wit, lest thereby thou displease God, to whom appertaineth all the good whatsoever thou hast by nature.

III. Esteem not thyself better than others, lest perhaps in the sight of God, who knoweth what is in man, thou be accounted worse than they.

Be not proud of well-doing ; for the judgment of God is far different from the judgment of men, and that often offendeth Him which pleaseth them.

If there be any good in thee, believe that there is much more

in others, that so thou mayest keep humility fresh within thee.

The humble enjoy continual peace, but in the heart of the proud is envy, and frequent indignation.

SELECTION V

Of Resisting Temptation

So long as we live in this world we cannot be without tribulation and temptation.

According as it is written in Job, "The life of man upon earth is a life of temptation."

Every one therefore ought to be careful about his temptations, and to watch in prayer, lest the devil find an advantage to deceive him; who never sleepeth, but goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

No man is so perfect and holy, but he hath sometimes temptations; and altogether without them we cannot be.

II. Nevertheless temptations are often very profitable to us, though they be troublesome and grievous; for in them a man is humbled, purified, and instructed.

All the Saints passed through many tribulations and temptations ; and profited thereby.

Fire trieth iron, and temptation a just man.

III. He that only avoideth them outwardly, and doth not pluck them up by the roots, shall profit little ; yea temptations will the sooner return unto him, and he shall feel himself in a worse case than before.

By little and little, and by patience with long-suffering (through God's help), thou shalt more easily overcome them than with harsh and violent measures of thine own.

Often take counsel in temptations, and deal not roughly with him that is tempted ; but give him comfort, as thou wouldest wish to be done to thyself.

Yet we must be watchful, especially in the beginning of the temptation ; for the enemy is then more easily overcome, if he be not suffered to enter the door of our hearts, but he resisted without the gate at his first knock.

Wherefore one said, "Withstand the beginnings, for an after remedy comes often too late."

For first there cometh to the mind a bare thought of evil, then a strong imagination thereof, afterwards delight, and an evil motion, and then consent.

And so by little and little our wicked enemy getteth complete entrance, whilst he is not resisted in the beginning.

And the longer a man is negligent in resisting, so much the weaker does he become daily in himself, and the enemy stronger against him.

IV. Some suffer great temptations in the beginning of their conversion; others in the latter end.

Others again are much troubled almost through the whole time of their life.

Some are guarded from great temptations, and in little daily ones are often overcome.

Some are but easily tempted, according to the wisdom and equity of the Divine appointment,

which weigheth the states and deserts of men, and ordaineth all things for the welfare of his own chosen ones.

V. We ought not therefore to despair when we are tempted, but so much the more fervently to pray unto God, that He will vouchsafe to help us in all tribulations.

SELECTION VI

Of Works Done Through Love

Without love the exterior work profiteth nothing; but whatsoever is done through love, be it never so little and contemptible in the sight of the world, it becomes wholly fruitful.

For God weigheth more with how much love a man worketh, than how much he doeth. He doeth much that loveth much.

II. He doeth much, that doeth a thing well.

He doeth well that rather serveth the community, than his own will.

Oftentimes it seemeth to be love, and it is rather human selfishness; because natural inclina-

tion, self-will, hope of reward, and desire of our own interest, will seldom be away.

III. He that hath true and perfect love, seeketh himself in nothing: but only desireth in all things that the glory of God should be exalted.

He also envieth none; because he doth aim at no selfish good neither will he rejoice in himself; but wisheth above all things to be made happy in the enjoyment of God.

He attributeth nothing that is good to any man, but wholly referreth it unto God, from whom as from the fountain all things proceed; in whom finally all the saints do rest as in their highest joy.

O he that hath but one spark of true love, would certainly discern that all earthly things be full of vanity.

SELECTION VII

Of Bearing with the Defects of Others

Endeavour to be patient in bearing with the defects and infirmities of others, of what sort

soever they be ; for that thyself also hast many failings which must be borne with by others.

If thou canst not make thyself such an one as thou wouldest, how canst thou expect to have another in all things to thy liking ?

We would willingly have others perfect, and yet we amend not our own faults.

II. We will have others severely corrected, and will not be corrected ourselves.

The large liberty of others displeaseth us ; and yet we will not have our own desires denied us.

We will have others kept under by strict laws ; but in no sort will ourselves be restrained.

..And thus it appeareth, how seldom we weigh our neighbour in the same balance with ourselves.

If all men were perfect, what should we have to suffer of our neighbour for God ?

III. Occasions of adversity best discover how great virtue or strength each one hath.

For occasions do not make a man frail, but they shew what he is.

Thou must learn to break thy own will in many things if thou wilt have peace and concord with others.

SELECTION VIII

Of Keeping a Good Purpose in Life

Daily ought we to renew our purposes, and to stir up ourselves to greater fervour, as though this were the first day of our conversion ; and to say,

“ Help me, my God ! in this my good purpose, and in Thy holy service ; and grant that I may now this day begin perfectly ; for that which I have done hitherto is as nothing.”

II. If thou canst not continually recollect thyself, yet do it sometimes, at the least once a day, namely, in the morning or at night.

In the morning fix thy good purpose ; and at night examine thyself what thou hast done, how thou hast behaved thyself in word, deed, and thought ; for in these perhaps thou hast oftentimes offended both God and thy neighbour.

Gird up thy loins like a man against the vile assaults of the devil ; bridle thy riotous appetite, and thou shalt be the better able to keep under all the unruly motions of the flesh.

Never be entirely idle ; but either be reading, or writing, or praying, or meditating, or endeavouring something for the public good,

III. As for bodily austerities they must be used with discretion, neither are they to be practised of all men alike.

Those austerities which are not common are not to be exposed to public view ; for things private are practised more safely at home.

SELECTION IX

Of the Zealous Amendment of Our Whole Life

Be watchful and diligent in the service of God.

Thou oughtest to have a good hope of getting the victory ; but thou must not be secure, lest thou grow either negligent or proud.

II. When one that was in anxiety of mind, often wavering

between fear and hope, did once, being oppressed with grief, humbly prostrate himself in a church before the altar in prayer, and said within himself, "O if I knew that I should yet persevere!" he presently heard within him an answer from God, which said, "What if thou didst know it, what wouldest thou do? Do now what thou wouldest do then, and thou shalt be secure."

And being herewith comforted and strengthened, he committed himself wholly to the will of God, and that noisome anxiety ceased:

Neither had he the mind to search curiously any farther, to know what should befall him.

III. Be mindful of the profession thou hast made, and have always before the eyes of thy soul the remembrance of thy Saviour crucified.

Thou hast good cause to be ashamed in looking upon the life of Jesus Christ, seeing thou hast not as yet endeavoured to conform thyself more unto Him though thou hast been a long time in the way of God.

A religious person that exerciseth himself seriously and devoutly in the most holy life and suffering of our Lord, shall there abundantly find whatsoever is necessary and profitable for him; neither shall he need to seek any better thing, out of Jesus.

O if Jesus crucified would come into our hearts, how quickly and fully should we be instructed in all truth!

IV. Remember always thy end, and how that time lost never returns. Without care and diligence thou shalt never get virtue.

If thou begin to grow lukewarm, it will begin to be evil with thee:

But if thou give thyself to fervour of spirit, thou shalt find much peace, and feel less labour, through the assistance of God's grace, and the love of virtue.

The fervent and diligent man is prepared for all things.

It is harder work to resist vices and passions, than to toil in bodily labours.

He that avoideth not small faults, by little and little falleth into greater.

Thou wilt always rejoice in the evening, if thou spend the day profitably.

Be watchful over thyself, stir up thyself, admonish thyself, and whatever becomes of others neglect not thyself.

The more holy violence thou usest against thyself, the greater shall be thy spiritual profiting. Amen.

The Second Book

Admonitions Tending to Things Internal

SELECTION I

Of the Inward Life

“**T**HE Kingdom of God is within you,” saith the Lord. Turn thee with thy whole heart unto the Lord, and forsake this wretched world, and thy soul shall find rest.

Learn to despise outward things, and to give thyself to things inward, and thou shalt perceive the Kingdom of God to come in thee.

“For the Kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,” which is not given to the unholy.

Christ will come unto thee, and shew thee His own consolation, if thou prepare for Him a worthy mansion within thee.

All His glory and beauty is from within, and there He delighteth Himself.

The inward man He often visiteth; and hath with him sweet discourses, pleasant solace, much peace, familiarity exceeding wonderful.

II. O faithful soul, make ready thy heart for this Bridegroom, that He may vouchsafe to come unto thee, and to dwell within thee.

For thus saith He, "If any love Me, he will keep My words, and We will come unto him, will make Our abode with him."

Give therefore admittance unto Christ, and deny entrance to all others.

When thou hast Christ, thou art rich, and hast enough. He will be thy faithful and provident helper in all things, so as thou shalt not need to trust in men.

For men soon change, and quickly fail; but Christ remaineth for ever, and standeth by us firmly unto the end.

III. If thou canst not contemplate high and heavenly things, rest thyself in the sufferings of Christ, and dwell willingly in His sacred wounds.

For if thou fly devoutly unto the wounds and precious marks of the Lord Jesus, thou shalt feel great comfort in tribulation: neither wilt thou much care for the slights of men, and wilt easily bear words of detraction.

IV. Christ was also in the world, despised of men, and in greatest necessity, forsaken by His acquaintance and friends, in the midst of slanders.

Christ was willing to suffer and be despised; and darest thou complain of any man?

Christ had adversaries and backbiters; and dost thou wish to have all men thy friends and benefactors?

Whence shall thy patience attain her crown if no adversity befall thee?

If thou art willing to suffer no opposition, how wilt thou be the friend of Christ?

Be strong with Christ, and for Christ, if thou desire to reign with Christ.

V. If thou hadst but once perfectly entered into the secrets of the Lord Jesus, and tasted a little

of His ardent love ; then wouldest thou not regard thine own convenience or inconvenience, but rather wouldest rejoice at slanders, if they should be cast upon thee ; for the love of Jesus maketh a man despise himself.

A lover of Jesus and of the truth and a true inward Christian, and one free from inordinate affections, can freely turn himself unto God, and lift himself above himself in spirit, and with joy remain at rest.

SELECTION II

Of a Pure Mind, and Simple Intention

By two wings, a man is lifted up from things earthly, namely, by Simplicity and Purity.

Simplicity ought to be in our intention ; Purity in our affections. Simplicity doth tend towards God ; Purity doth apprehend and, as it were taste Him.

No good action will hinder thee, if thou be inwardly free from inordinate affection.

If thou intend and seek nothing else but the will of God and the

good of thy neighbour, thou shalt thoroughly enjoy internal liberty.

If thy heart were sincere and upright, then every creature would be unto thee a looking-glass of life, and a book of holy doctrine.

There is no creature so small and abject, that it representeth not the goodness of God.

If there be joy in the world, surely a man of a pure heart possesseth it.

And if there be anywhere tribulation and affliction, an evil conscience best knows it.

As iron put into the fire loseth its rust, and becometh clearly red hot, so he that wholly turneth himself unto God, puts off all slothfulness, and is transformed into a new man.

When a man beginneth to grow lukewarm, then he is afraid of a little labour, and willingly receiveth external comfort.

But when he once beginneth to overcome himself perfectly, and to walk manfully in the way of God; then he esteemeth those things to be light which before seemed grievous unto him.

SELECTION III

Of the Joy of a Good Conscience

The glory of a good man, is the testimony of a good conscience.

Have a good conscience, and thou shalt ever have joy.

A good conscience is able to bear very much, and is very cheerful in adversities.

An evil conscience is always fearful and unquiet.

II. He enjoyeth great tranquillity of heart, that careth neither for the praises, nor dispraises, of men.

He will easily be content and pacified, whose conscience is pure.

Thou art not the more holy, though thou be commended; nor the more worthless, though thou be found fault with.

What thou art, that thou art; neither by words canst thou be made greater, than what thou art in the sight of God.

If thou consider what thou art within thee, thou wilt not care what men talk of thee.

Man looketh on the countenance, but God on the heart.

Man considereth the deeds, but
God weigheth the intentions.

To be always doing well, and
to esteem little of one's self, is
the sign of an humble soul.

SELECTION IV

Of Familiar Converse with Jesus

When Jesus is present, all is
well, and nothing seems difficult ;
but when Jesus is absent, every-
thing is hard.

When Jesus speaks not in-
wardly to us, all other comfort is
nothing worth ; but if Jesus
speak but one word, we feel great
consolation.

Happy hour ! when Jesus
calleth from tears to spiritual joy.

How dry and hard art thou
without Jesus ! How foolish and
vain, if thou desire anything, out
of Jesus !

II. It is matter of great skill
to know how to hold converse
with Jesus ; and to know how to
keep Jesus, a point of great wisdom.

Be thou humble and peaceable,
and Jesus will be with thee.

Be devout and quiet, and Jesus
will stay with thee.

Thou mayest soon drive away Jesus, and lose His favour, if thou wilt turn aside to outward things.

And if thou shouldest drive Him from thee, and lose Him, unto whom wilt thou flee, and whom wilt thou then seek for thy friend ?

Without a friend thou canst not well live : and if Jesus be not above all a friend to thee, thou shalt be indeed sad and desolate.

Thou actest therefore like an idiot, if thou trust or rejoice in any other.

It is preferable to have all the world against us, rather than to have Jesus offended with us.

Amongst all therefore that be dear unto us, let Jesus alone be specially beloved.

III. Love all for Jesus, but Jesus for Himself.

SELECTION V

Of the Want of All Comfort

It is no hard matter to despise human comfort, when we have divine.

It is much and very much, to be able to want both human and

divine comfort ; and, for God's honour, to be willing cheerfully to endure banishment of heart ; and to seek himself in nothing, nor to regard his own merit.

What great matter is it, if at the coming of Grace thou be cheerful and devout ? this hour is wished for of all men.

He rideth easily enough whom the grace of God carrieth.

And what marvel if he feel not his burden, who is borne up by the Almighty, and led by the Sovereign Guide ?

II. A man must strive long and mightily within himself, before he can learn fully to master himself and to draw his whole heart into God.

We are always willing to have something for our comfort ; and a man doth not without difficulty strip himself of self.

But a true lover of Christ, and a diligent follower of all virtue, does not fall back on comforts, nor seek such sensible sweetnesses ; but rather prefers hard exercises, and to sustain severe labours for Christ.

III. When therefore spiritual comfort is given thee from God, receive it with thankfulness ; but understand that it is the gift of God, nor any desert of thine.

When consolation is taken from thee, do not immediately despair ; but with humility and patience wait for the heavenly visitation ; for God is able to give thee back again more ample consolation.

This is nothing new nor strange unto them that have experience in the way of God ; for the great Saints and ancient Prophets had oftentimes experience of such kind of vicissitudes.

IV. I never found any so religious and devout, that he had not sometimes a withdrawing of grace, or felt not some decrease of zeal.

There was never Saint so highly rapt and illuminated, who first or last was not tempted.

For he is not worthy of the high contemplation of God, who hath not been exercised with some tribulation for God's sake.

For temptations going before, is wont to be a sign of ensuing comfort.

For unto those that are proved by temptations, heavenly comfort is promised. "He that shall overcome," saith He, "I will give him to eat of the Tree of Life."

V. But divine consolation is given, that a man may be bolder to bear adversities.

There followeth also temptations, lest he should wax proud of any good.

The devil sleepeth not, neither is the flesh as yet dead; therefore cease not to prepare thyself to the battle; for on thy right hand and on thy left are enemies who never rest.

SELECTION VI

How Few are the Lovers of the Cross of Jesus

Jesus hath now many lovers of His heavenly Kingdom, but few bearers of His Cross.

He hath many desirous of consolation, but few of tribulation.

He findeth many companions of His table, but few of His abstinence.

All desire to rejoice with Him, few are willing to endure anything for him, or with Him.

Many follow Jesus unto the breaking of bread;¹ but few to the drinking of the cup of His Passion.²

Many reverence His miracles, few follow the ignominy of His Cross.

Many love Jesus so long as no adversities befall them.

Many praise and bless Him, so long as they receive any consolations from Him.

But if Jesus hide Himself, and leave them but a little while; they fall either into complaining, or into too much dejection of mind.

II. But they who love Jesus for the sake of Jesus, and not for some special comfort of their own, bless Him in all tribulation and anguish of heart, as well

¹ "*The breaking of bread*," i.e., the love-feast held by the Lord with His disciples the night before His death.

² "*The cup of His Passion*," i.e., the lonely suffering which He bore the next day.

as in the state of highest comfort.

If a man should give all his substance, yet is it nothing.

And if he should practise great repentance, still it is little.

And if he should attain to all knowledge, he is still afar off.

And if he should be of great virtue, and of very fervent devotion, yet there is much wanting: especially, one thing, which is most necessary for him.

What is that? That leaving all, he forsake himself, and go wholly from himself, and retain nothing out of self-love.

And when he hath done all that is to be done, so far as he knoweth, let him think that he hath done nothing.

Then may he be truly poor and naked in spirit, and say with the Prophet, "I am alone and poor."

Yet no man richer than he, no man more powerful, no man more free; for he is able to leave himself and all things, and to set himself in the lowest place.

SELECTION VII

Of the King's High Way of the Holy Cross¹

Unto many this seemeth an hard speech, "Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Jesus."

But much harder will it be to hear that last word, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

For they who now willingly hear and follow the word of the Cross, shall not then fear to hear the sentence of everlasting damnation.

This sign of the Cross shall be in the Heaven, when the Lord shall come to judgment.

Then all the servants of the Cross, who in their lifetime conformed themselves unto Christ crucified, shall draw near unto Christ the Judge with great confidence.

¹ *Christ was willing to suffer a death of torture on the Cross in order to reveal God. Therefore, in Christian language, any suffering or persecution or loss which a man bears willingly in the service of God is called his "Cross." This suffering is the High Way into the life of God.*

II. Why therefore fearest thou to take up the Cross which leadeth thee to a kingdom ?

In the Cross is salvation, in the Cross is life, in the Cross is protection against our enemies, in the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the Cross is strength of mind, in the Cross joy of spirit, in the Cross the height of virtue, in the Cross the perfection of sanctity.

There is no salvation of the soul, nor hope of everlasting life, but in the Cross.

Take up therefore thy Cross and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting. He went before, bearing His Cross, and died for thee on the Cross; that thou mayest also bear thy Cross and desire to die on the Cross with Him.

Go where thou wilt, seek whatsoever thou wilt, thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy Cross.

III. Dispose and order all things according to thy will and judgment; yet thou shalt ever

find, that of necessity thou must suffer somewhat, either willingly or against thy will, and so thou shalt ever find the Cross.

For either thou shalt feel pain in thy body, or in thy soul thou shalt suffer tribulation of spirit.

Sometimes thou shalt be forsaken of God, sometimes thou shalt be troubled by thy neighbours ; and, what is more, oftentimes thou shalt be wearisome to thyself.

The Cross therefore is always ready, and everywhere waits for thee.

Thou canst not escape it whithersoever thou runnest ; for wheresoever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee, and shalt ever find thyself.

Both above and below, without and within, which way soever thou dost turn thee, everywhere thou shalt find the Cross ; and everywhere of necessity thou must hold fast patience, if thou wilt have inward peace, and enjoy an everlasting crown.

IV. If thou bear the Cross cheerfully, it will bear thee, and

lead thee to the desired end, namely, where there shall be an end of suffering, though here there shall not be.

If thou bear it unwillingly, thou makest for thyself a new burden, and increasest thy load, and yet notwithstanding thou must bear it.

If thou cast away one cross, without doubt thou shalt find another, and that perhaps a more heavy one.

Thinkest thou to escape that which no mortal man could ever avoid? Which of the Saints in the world was without crosses and tribulation?

V. It is not according to man's inclination to bear the Cross, to love the Cross, to chastise the body, and bring it into subjection, to flee honours, to be willing to suffer, to despise himself and to wish to be despised, to endure all adversities and damages, and to desire no prosperity in this world.

If thou look to thyself, thou shalt be able of thyself to accomplish nothing of this kind.

But if thou trust in the Lord, fortitude shall be given thee from Heaven, and the world and the flesh shall be made subject to thy command.

Neither shalt thou fear thy enemy the devil, if thou be armed with faith, and signed with the Cross of Christ.

VI. Set thyself therefore, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the Cross of thy Lord, who out of love was crucified for thee.

Drink of the Lord's cup with hearty affection, if thou desire to be His friend, and to have part with Him.

As for comforts, leave them to God ; let Him do therein as shall best please Him.

But do thou set thyself to suffer tribulations, and account them the greatest comforts ; for the sufferings of this present time, although thou alone couldst suffer them all, cannot worthily deserve the glory which is to come.

VII. When thou shalt come to this estate, that tribulation

shall seem sweet, and thou shalt
relish it for Christ's sake; then
think it to be well with thee, for
thou hast found a Paradise upon
earth.

The Third Book

Of Internal Consolation

SELECTION I

**Of Christ's Speaking Inwardly to
the Faithful Soul**

“I WILL hearken what
the Lord God will
speak in me.”

Blessed is the soul
which heareth the Lord speaking
within her, and receiveth from His
mouth the word of consolation.

Blessed are the ears that gladly
receive the pulses of the Divine
whisper, and give no heed to the
many whisperings of this world.

Blessed indeed are those ears
which listen not after the voice
which is sounding without, but
for the Truth teaching inwardly.

SELECTION II

**That the Words of God are to be
Heard with Humility, and that
Many Weigh Them Not**

My son, hear My words, words of
greatest sweetness, surpassing all

the knowledge of the philosophers and wise men of this world. "My words are Spirit and Life," and not to be weighed by the understanding of man.

They are not to be drawn forth for vain approbation, but to be heard in silence, and to be received with all humility and great affection.

II. I taught the Prophets from the beginning (saith the Lord), and cease not, even to this day, to speak to all; but many are hardened, and deaf to My voice.

The generality of persons do more willingly listen to the world than to God; they sooner follow the desires of their own flesh, than God's good pleasure.

The world promiseth things temporal and mean, and is served with great eagerness: I promise things most high and eternal, and yet the hearts of men remain torpid and insensible.

Who is there that in all things serveth and obeyeth Me with so great care as the world and its lords are served withal?

For a small income, a long journey is undertaken; for ever-

lasting life, many will scarce once lift a foot from the ground.

The most pitiful reward is sought after; for a single bit of money sometimes there is shameful contention; for a vain matter and slight promise, men fear not to toil day and night.

III. But, alas! for an unchangeable good, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honour and glory without end, they grudge even the least fatigue.

Be ashamed, therefore, thou slothful and complaining servant, that they are found to be more ready to destruction than thou to life.

They rejoice more in vanity than thou dost in the truth.

Sometimes, indeed, they are frustrated of their hope; but My promise deceiveth none, nor sendeth him away empty that trusteth in Me.

What I have promised, I will give; what I have said, I will fulfil; if only any man remain faithful in My love even to the end.

IV. Write thou My words in thy heart, and meditate diligently

on them ; for in time of temptation they will be very needful for thee.

What thou understandest not when thou readest, thou shalt know in the day of visitation.

V. *A Prayer to Implore the Grace of Devotion.*

O Lord my God ! Thou art to me whatsoever is good. And who am I, that I should dare speak to Thee ? I am Thy poorest meanest servant, and a most vile worm, much more poor and contemptible than I can or dare express.

Yet do Thou remember me, O Lord, because I am nothing, I have nothing, and I can do nothing.

Thou alone art Good, Just, and Holy ; Thou canst do all things, Thou accomplishest all things, Thou fillest all things, only the sinner Thou leavest empty.

Remember Thy mercies, and fill my heart with Thy grace, Thou who wilt not that Thy works should be void and in vain.

Teach me, O Lord, to do Thy will ; teach me to live worthily and humbly in Thy sight ; for

Thou art my Wisdom, Thou dost truly know me, and didst know me before the world was made, and before I was born in the world.

SELECTION III

Of the Noble Love of God

Ah, Lord God, Thou Holy Lover of my soul, when Thou comest into my heart, all that is within me shall rejoice.

Set me free from evil passions, and heal my heart of all inordinate affections; that being inwardly cured and thoroughly cleansed, I may be made fit to love, courageous to suffer, steady to persevere.

III. Love is a great thing, yea, a great and thorough good; by itself it makes everything that is heavy, light; and it bears evenly all that is uneven.

For it carries a burden which is no burden and makes everything that is bitter, sweet and tasteful.

The noble love of Jesus impels a man to do great things, and stirs him up to be always longing for what is more perfect.

Love desires to be aloft, and will not be kept back by anything low and mean.

Love desires to be free, and estranged from all worldly affections, that so its inward sight may not be hindered ; that it may not be entangled by any temporal prosperity, or by any adversity subdued.

Nothing is sweeter than Love, nothing more courageous, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller nor better in heaven and earth ; because Love is born of God, and cannot rest but in God, above all created things.

IV. He that loveth flyeth, runneth and rejoiceth ; he is free, and cannot be held in.

He giveth all for all, and hath all in all ; because he resteth in One Highest above all things, from whom all that is good flows and proceeds.

He respecteth not the gifts, but turneth himself above all goods unto the Giver.

Love feels no burden, thinks nothing of trouble, attempts what

is above its strength, pleads no excuse of impossibility; for it thinks all things lawful for itself and all things possible.

It is therefore able to undertake all things, and it completes many things, and warrants them to take effect, where he, who does not love, would faint and lie down.

If any man love, he knoweth what is the cry of this voice. For it is a loud cry in the ears of God, the mere ardent affection of the soul, when it saith, "My God, my Love, Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine."

VIII. He that is not prepared to suffer all things, and to stand to the will of his Beloved is not worthy to be called a lover of God.

A lover ought to embrace willingly all that is hard and distasteful, for the sake of his Beloved; and not to turn away from Him for any contrary accidents.

SELECTION IV

Of the Proof of a True Lover of Christ

My son, thou art not yet a courageous and considerate lover.

Wherefore sayest Thou this, O Lord?

Because for a slight opposition thou givest over thy undertakings, and too eagerly seekest consolation.

Know that the ancient Enemy doth strive by all means to hinder thy desire to good, and to keep thee clear of all religious exercises; particularly from the reverend estimation of God's saints, from the devout commemoration of My suffering and death, from the profitable remembrance of sins, from the guard of thine own heart, and from the firm purpose of advancing in virtue.

Many evil thoughts does he suggest to thee, that so he may cause a wearisomeness and horror in thee, to call thee back from prayer and holy reading.

Humble confession is displeasing unto him; and if he could, he would cause thee to cease from Holy Communion.

Trust him not, nor care for him, although he should often set snares of deceit to entrap thee.

Charge him with it, when he suggesteth evil and unclean thoughts unto thee; say unto him,

“Away thou unclean Spirit! blush, thou miserable wretch! most unclean art thou that bringest such things unto mine ears.

“Begone from me, thou wicked Seducer! thou shalt have no part in me: but Jesus shall be with me as a strong Warrior, and thou shalt stand confounded.

“I had rather die, and undergo any torment, than consent unto thee.”

Fight like a good soldier: and if thou sometimes fall through frailty, take again greater strength than before, trusting in My more abundant grace: and take great heed of vain pleatings of thyself and of pride.

SELECTION V

**That All Things are to be Referred
unto God, as their Last End**

My son, I ought to be thy supreme and ultimate end, if thou desire to be truly blessed.

With this intention thy affections will be purified, which are too often inordinately inclined to selfishness and unto creatures.

For if in anything thou seekest thyself, immediately thou faintest and driest up.

I would therefore thou shouldest refer all things principally unto Me, for I am He who have given all.

Consider everything as flowing from the Highest Good; and therefore unto me as their Original all must be reduced.

II. From Me, as from a living fountain, the small and the great, the poor and the rich, do draw the water of life; and they that willingly and freely serve Me, shall receive grace for grace.

But he who desires to glory in things out of Me, or to take pleasure in some private good, shall not be grounded in true joy, nor be enlarged in his heart, but shall many ways be encumbered and straitened.

Thou oughtest therefore to ascribe nothing of good to thyself, nor do thou attribute goodness unto any man; but give all unto

God, without whom man hath nothing.

I have bestowed all, and My will is to have thee all again; and with great strictness do I require a return of thanks.

III. This is the truth whereby vain-glory is put to flight.

SELECTION VI

Of the Endurance of Injuries, and of the Proof of True Patience

What is it thou sayest, My son?

Call to mind the more heavy sufferings of others, that so thou mayest the easier bear thy own very small troubles.

And if they seem unto thee not very small, then beware lest thy impatience be the cause thereof.

However, whether they be small or whether they be great, endeavour patiently to undergo them all.

II. Do not say, "I cannot endure to suffer these things at the hands of such an one, nor ought I to endure things of this sort; for he hath done me great wrong, and reproacheth me with things which I never thought of;

but of another I will willingly suffer, that is, if they are also things which I shall see I ought to suffer."

Such a thought is foolish ; it considereth not the virtue of patience, nor by whom it will be crowned ; but rather, weigheth too exactly the persons, and the injuries offered to itself.

He is not truly patient, who is willing to suffer only so much as he thinks good, and from whom he pleases.

But the truly patient man minds not by whom he is exercised, whether by his superiors, by one of his equals, or by an inferior ; whether by a good and holy man, or by one that is perverse and unworthy.

But indifferently from every creature, how much soever, or how often soever anything adverse befalls him, he takes it all thankfully as from the hands of God, and esteems in a great gain :

For with God it is impossible that anything, how small soever, if only it be suffered for God's

sake, should pass without its reward.

III. Be thou therefore always prepared for the fight, if thou wilt have the victory.

Without a combat thou canst not attain unto the crown of patience.

If thou art unwilling to suffer, thou refusest to be crowned. But if thou desire to be crowned, fight manfully, endure patiently.

SELECTION VII

Of Putting Our Trust in God When Evil Words Arise

My son, stand steadily, and put thy trust in me, for what are words, but words ?

They fly through the air, but a stone they cannot hurt.

If thou art guilty, think that thou wouldest gladly amend thyself ; if conscience reproach thee not, consider that thou wouldest gladly suffer this for God's sake.

Little enough it is, to suffer sometimes from words, since thou hast not yet the courage to endure hard stripes.

And why do such small matters go to thy heart, but because thou

art yet carnal, and regardest men more than thou oughtest ?

For it is because thou art afraid of being despised, that thou art unwilling to be reproved for thy faults, and seekest the shelter of excuses.

SELECTION VIII

Of Four Things that Bring Much Inward Peace

My son, now will I teach thee the way of peace and true liberty.

Be desirous, My son, to do the will of another rather than thine own.

CHOOSE ALWAYS TO HAVE
LESS RATHER THAN MORE.

SEEK ALWAYS THE LOWEST
PLACE, AND TO BE INFERIOR TO
EVERY ONE.

WISH ALWAYS, AND PRAY,
THAT THE WILL OF GOD MAY BE
WHOLLY FULFILLED IN THEE.

SELECTION IX

Of Pure and Entire Resignation of Ourselves, for the Obtaining Freedom of Heart

My son, forsake thyself, and
thou shalt find Me.

For great grace shall be added to thee the moment thou dost resign thyself, provided thou dost not turn back to take thyself again.

Lord, how often shall I resign myself? and wherein shall I forsake myself.

Always, yea, every hour; as well in small things as in great. I except nothing, but do desire that thou be found naked and void of all things.

Otherwise, how canst thou be Mine, and I thine, unless thou be stript of all self-will, both within and without?

I have very often said unto thee, and now again I say the same, Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy much inward peace.

Give all for all; ask for nothing, require back nothing; abide purely and unhesitatingly in Me, and thou shalt possess Me: thou shalt be free in heart, and darkness shall not tread thee down.

Let this be thy whole endeavour, this thy prayer, this thy desire; that thou mayest be stript of all

selfishness, and with entire simplicity follow Jesus only; mayest die to thyself, and live eternally to Me.

SELECTION X

Of Good Government in Things External, and of having Re- course to God in Dangers

My son, thou oughtest with all diligence to endeavour, that in every place, and in every external action or occupation, thou mayest be inwardly free, and thoroughly master of thyself; and that all things be under thee, and not thou under them.

Thou must be lord and master of thine own actions, and not be a slave or a hireling.

Rather thou shouldest be as a freed man and a true Hebrew, passing over into the lot and freedom of the sons of God.

For they, standing upon things present, c o n t e m p l a t e things eternal.

They are not drawn by temporal things to cleave unto them; rather they draw temporal things to serve them well, in such ways as

they are ordained by God, and appointed by the Great Workmaster, who hath left nothing in His creation without due order.

SELECTION XI

Of the Contempt of all Temporal Honour

My son, make it no matter of thine, if thou see others honoured and advanced, but thyself contemned and debased.

Lift up thy heart into heaven to Me, and the contempt of men on earth will not grieve thee.

SELECTION XII

That we are to Rest in God above all Things which are Good, and above all His own Gifts

Above all things, and in all things, O my soul, thou shalt rest in the Lord alway, for He Himself is the everlasting Rest of the Saints.

Grant me, O most sweet and loving Jesus, to rest in Thee above all creatures, above all health and beauty, above all glory and honour, above all power and dignity, above all knowledge

and subtilty, above all riches and arts, above all joy and gladness, above all fame and praise, above all sweetness and comfort, above all hope and promise, above all desert and desire :

Above all gifts and favours that Thou canst give and impart unto us, above all mirth and jubilee that the mind of man can receive and feel :

Finally above Angels and Archangels, and above all the heavenly host, above all things visible and invisible, and above all that Thou art not, O my God.

II. Because Thou, O Lord my God, art supremely good above all; Thou alone art most high, Thou alone most powerful, Thou alone most full and sufficient, Thou alone most sweet and most full of consolation :

Thou alone art most lovely and loving, Thou alone most noble and glorious above all things, in whom all good things together both perfectly are, and ever have been, and shall be.

III. O Thou most beloved spouse of my soul, Jesus Christ,

Thou most pure Lover, Thou
Lord of all creation : O that I
had the wings of true liberty, that
I might flee away and rest in
Thee !

O when shall it be fully granted
me, to consider in quietness of
mind and see how sweet Thou
art, my Lord God ?

Come, O come ; for without
Thee I shall have no joyful day
nor hour ; for Thou art my joy,
and without Thee my table is
empty.

A wretched creature am I, and
in a manner imprisoned and
loaded with fetters, until Thou
refresh me with the light of Thy
presence, and grant me liberty,
and shew a friendly countenance
toward me.

V. Let others seek what they
please instead of Thee ; but for
me, nothing else doth nor shall
delight me, but Thou only, my
God, my hope, my everlasting
salvation.

I will not hold my peace, nor
cease to pray, until Thy grace
return again, and Thou speak
inwardly unto me.

Behold, here I am. Behold, I come unto thee, because thou hast called Me.

SELECTION XIII

(From Book IV)

Of the Oblation of Christ on the Cross and of Resignation of Ourselves

The Voice of the Beloved

As I of Mine own will did offer up Myself unto God the Father for thy sins, My hands stretched out on the cross, and My body stripped and laid bare, so that nothing remained in Me that was not wholly turned into a sacrifice for the appeasing of the divine Majesty :

In like manner oughtest thou also to offer thyself willingly unto Me every day in the Holy Communion, as a pure and sacred oblation, with all thy strength and affections, and to the utmost reach of thy inward faculties.

What do I require of thee more, than that thou study to resign thyself entirely unto Me?

Whatsoever thou givest besides thyself, is of no value in My

sight, for I seek not thy gifts, but thee.

II. As it would not suffice thee to have all things whatsoever, besides Me; so neither can it please Me, whatsoever thou givest if thou offer not thyself.

Offer up thyself unto Me, and give thyself wholly for God, and thy offering shall be acceptable.

Behold, I offered up Myself wholly unto My Father for thee; I give also My whole Body and Blood for thy food, that I might be wholly thine, and that thou mightest continue Mine to the end.

But if thou stand upon thyself, and dost not offer thyself up freely unto My will, the oblation is not complete, neither will there be entire union between us.

Therefore a free offering up of thyself into the hands of God ought to go before all thine actions if thou desire to obtain liberty and grace.

For this is the cause why so few become illuminated and inwardly free, because they cannot endure wholly to deny themselves.

My sentence standeth sure,
"Unless a man forsake all, he
cannot be My disciple." If thou
therefore desire to be my disciple,
offer up thyself unto Me with thy
whole affections.

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